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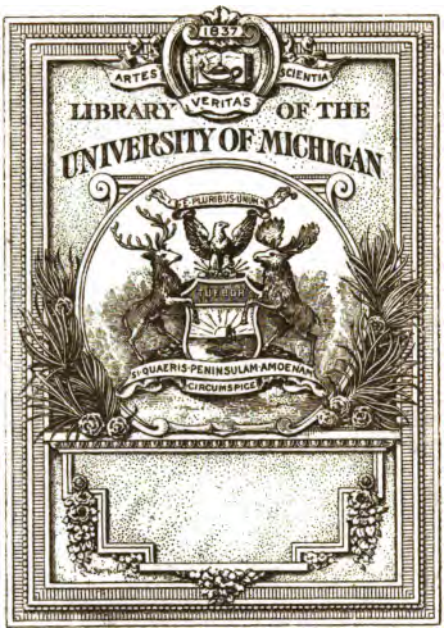
JOHN NICOLET

EXERCISES AT THE UNVEILING OF THE TABLET COMMEMORATING THE DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION OF THE NORTHWEST; HELD ON MACKINAC ISLAND, JULY 12, 1915, UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE MICHIGAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION AND THE MACKINAC ISLAND STATE PARK COMMISSION

LANSING
MICHIGAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION
1918



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LANSING
MICHIGAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION
1915

NICOLET DAY ON MACKINAC ISLAND.

A BRONZE TABLET in commemoration of the discovery and exploration of the Northwest by John Nicolet was unveiled with appropriate ceremonies on Mackinac Island, July 12, 1915. The arrangements for the occasion were made by Hon. Edwin O. Wood, a member both of the Michigan Historical Commission and the Mackinac State Park Commission, under the auspices of which organizations the exercises were conducted; and Mr. Wood also generously bore the expenses.

The day was perfect; and the Island was at its best. The speakers' platform was placed near Arch Rock, and the audience was seated in a grove of pines. The air was still, and every word uttered by the speakers was clearly heard.

Mr. John F. Hogan, of Detroit, editor of *The Gateway,* acted as chairman. His introductory remarks were:

THE CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

Members of the Michigan Historical Commission, the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, Reverend Gentlemen, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The question has been asked over and over again; why does not Michigan pay deserved tribute to those explorers and missionaries who came here several hundred years ago, and opened the way to civilization?

Why has not our state preserved, in tangible form, the names and records of their early achievements so that future generations may know and understand the lessons of their early sacrifices and thus appreciate all the more, the invaluable heritage they left us?

Happily, this question need no longer be asked.

The Michigan Historical Commission, created in 1909 by act of the legislature, is now officially charged with the task of collecting historical relics and compiling historical data of Michigan.

The six members of the Commission, are recognized throughout the country as distinguished authors and historians, eminently qualified for the difficult position they occupy. They have given their services freely and gladly to this noble and enduring work.

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To them has been assigned the task of delving into the early records of discoverers,—of collecting, analyzing and compiling the many thousands of pamphlets so that an accurate, complete account of the early history of Michigan may be preserved for future generations. When it is stated that more than 200 names of explorers and missionaries have been accepted as entitled to enter the Michigan Hall of Fame, the task of the Commission may be dimly understood.

In carrying out its purposes, the Commission agreed that the names and discoveries of these early explorers and missionaries should be commemorated by placing memorial tablets throughout the state parks so that we of today and tomorrow, may understand to whom we owe our present civilization.

The assistance, therefore, of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission was solicited and the plans for the Nicolet Day celebration were prepared under their joint auspices. The exercises today, are the result.

When the list of speakers for today's celebration was being prepared, Rt. Rev. Chas. D. Williams, the distinguished head of the Episcopal Diocese of Detroit, was selected to deliver the Invocation. An unexpected summons, however, called him to New York. The Committee was in a quandary. Who could acceptably fill the position?

At this most trying time, Mr. Hirt of Louisville, whose palatial cottage is one of the most beautiful attractions on the Island, came to the rescue by suggesting that one of his guests, a former resident of Detroit, might be induced to undertake the task. The suggestion was gladly received and accepted and Mr. Hirt was empowered to make such arrangements. That he has fulfilled his mission most completely, you will all presently agree.

During many years of experience in Detroit, I, in conjunction with other citizens of that city, had often heard many sincere expressions of commendation concerning Rev. C. D. Woodcock. At that time, he was in charge of one of the most prosperous parishes of the city—St. John's Episcopal Church—and was deeply beloved by his congregation. His deep sincerity, his broad charity, his nobility of character and the pronounced success he achieved in his chosen field, made him widely and favorably known. It was natural that a man of his recognized ability and attainments, should be marked for elevation. His friends, therefore, are not surprised to know that Rev. Mr. Woodcock is now a distinguished prelate, the Episcopal Bishop of Kentucky.

UNVEILING THE NICOLET TABLET.

NICOLET WATCH TOWER IN HONOR OF JOHN NICOLET, WHO IN 1634 PASSED THROUGH THE STRAITS OF MACKINAC IN A BIRCH BARK CANOE AND WAS THE FIRST WHITE MAN TO ENTER MICHIGAN AND THE OLD NORTHWEST. ERECTED ON BEHALF OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN BY THE MICHIGAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION AND THE MACKINAC ISLAND STATE PARK COMMISSION. 1915.

The directing head of any great religious body must be a real man, a true man, a live man, a simple man; great in his life, in his love, in his work, in his broad mindedness. Such are the characteristics of the distinguished gentleman who will deliver the Invocation. I have the pleasure of presenting Rt. Rev. C. D. Woodcock, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Kentucky.

The Invocation by Bishop Woodcock followed.

THE CHAIRMAN: A few days ago, the sound of a voice came to me over many miles of a thin copper wire. The tones were so clear, that, in imagination, I could see the kindly face of my friend as he called to me, his greetings of good cheer. An ordinary occurrence, you say, yet no sane person, one hundred years ago, would have deemed this feat possible.

The Michigan Central Railroad and the D. & C. steamboats, carry one almost over night from Detroit to this wonderful and historic island of rest. Yet, if men had declared two hundred years ago, that we of today would travel on railroad trains and steamboats, they would have been summarily punished as "witches."

Time, however, brings many changes. Today, gas, electricity and steam are so closely a part of our daily existence, that we give almost no heed to the wonderful possibilities they opened in our lives.

We look about us at the marvels wrought by man; at the great ocean liner, the fast railroad train; the deadly submarine; the flying airship; the telephone, the telegraph and the wireless with their instantaneous means of communication—but we no longer wonder. We accept them calmly—and then as calmly proceed to think of something else.

So it is, that, in our present state of mind, we scarcely realize the conditions that existed three hundred years ago in that part of the country, then known as the "Territory Northwest of the Ohio River," which we of today recognize as the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin.

This extensive region, embracing the upper lakes and the Valley of the Mississippi, was a vast, unknown wilderness, untouched by civilization. But to be just, we must consider conditions and remember that more white people live today in the city of Detroit, than were to be found in the whole of North America at that time. The country then was new and the inventive mind had not been nursed.

Let us not forget too, that in the 17th century, there were no

steam boats, no railroads or automobiles to carry passengers to distant points. No telegraph, no telephone, no civilization in 1634 in this very spot where we now stand—nothing but wild nature. Travel, of course, was slow and difficult; communication was indeed lacking.

In those early days, men had to walk through the thick underbrush and the wooded forests, carrying their burdens on their backs; or paddle in birch bark canoes over the waters.

Instead of public buildings, private residences, and churches; electric lights and well paved streets; the telephone and the telegraph; street cars and automobiles—all necessary and common adjuncts to an American city today—nothing but wild forests and prairies were to be seen. No habitation except an occasional wigwam.

Who of us would venture into an unknown world, not knowing when, if ever, we would return; traveling through the woods and streams all day and resting under the boughs at night; subsisting on what we could fish or shoot; fearful of the wild animals; deprived of the society of one's own people while all the time exposed to surrounding dangers?

Yes, this is exactly what early explorers had to face day after day.

Theirs was a life of toil and hardship, of facing danger constantly, meeting emergencies calmly and with a never failing trust in the help of the Almighty.

It was a period that tried men's very souls—but they were men. He whom we honor today was of that strong type. And in the final analysis, their success made it possible for the people of New France to come here and develop the vast region around us.

Are they not, then, our benefactors; do they not deserve much at our hands?

Memories of these daring explorers live with us today, in our own beloved state of Michigan. To them we owe all we possess. Their courage, their bravery, their fortitude and perseverance blazed the way for others who followed and builded. We, the citizens of great and prosperous commonwealths, now enjoy the fruits of their daring efforts.

And so, the great state of Michigan, acting officially through the cooperation of the Michigan Historical Commission and the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, decided to recognize in a befitting form, the invaluable services of these early explorers, by placing their memorial tablets in this, the state park of Michigan.

This is the spot and this is the day selected. John Nicolet is the first to be so honored.

Let us hope, that his tablet, placed on the historic Arch Rock, will be to all, a constant reminder of the great debt we owe him.

During my many visits to this beautiful Island, I have noticed a gentleman, age unknown, who seemed to know everybody and everything on Mackinac Island. My curiosity was aroused, so one day I asked my friend, Mr. E. O. Wood, if he knew this gentleman.

"Why, don't you know him? That is Colonel Preston who built Mackinac Island and has lived here ever since."

It has been said that nothing satisfies a patriot but a job. If patriot, in this instance, refers to the self sacrificing worker in that political party to which he owes allegiance, then is not such a worker entitled to consideration from his party? I think so. Colonel Preston is that type of man who believes that nothing is politically right that is morally wrong. He has carried that principle throughout life. In everything that has led to progress and improvement on Mackinac Island, Colonel Preston has been the leading figure. For many years he has been its official representative. At the present time, he is Mayor of Mackinac Island and as such, will extend his greeting to this gathering.

I take pleasure in introducing Colonel William P. Preston, Mayor of Mackinac Island.

Colonel Preston felicitated the audience on the large size of the gathering; he extended the hospitality of the Island to the guests in a brief and eloquent address.

THE CHAIRMAN: More than twenty years ago, I attended, merely as a spectator, a Democratic Convention, held in the city of Detroit. Like all Democratic political gatherings, this one was not free from verbal clashes. Eventually, the controversy over a certain question became so heated, that everybody was on foot, shouting for recognition. Finally, the Chairman recognized a certain delegate who did not waste time to ascend the platform, but instead, immediately jumped on his chair, and in a wonderful burst of oratory, kept the large audience spell bound for more than half an hour.

I remember him at that time, as a man over-flowing with enthusiasm and vitality, of great personal magnetism and unbounded love and loyalty to the political party which he represented. Such was my first view of Honorable E. O. Wood, Vice President of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, who will respond to the greetings of Welcome, in place of Mr. A. O. Jopling, whose business

prevents him from being here today. Mr. Wood will now address you.

ADDRESS OF HON. EDWIN O. WOOD.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would not mar this program by extended remarks, and will only say that it is a pleasant privilege to respond to a greeting and welcome by my friend Mayor Preston.

My first interest in Mackinac came through the knowledge of its beauties and historic setting, imparted to me by Colonel Preston. I congratulate you upon this splendid gathering, brought together to honor a noble character, whose activities in the work of Christianizing the Indians should give him an enduring place in American history.

To my mind there is a sacred and religious sentiment in connection with Mackinac Island and the Mackinac country. Here those self-sacrificing martyrs and heroes, the Jesuit missionaries, labored and suffered, to teach the savages the story of the Cross, and we are fortunate today, not only in the eminence and eloquence of all those who are to address us, but especially because a noted scholar and historian has honored this occasion by journeying from New York to tell us of Jean Nicolet.

We are indebted to the President of the Michigan Historical Commission, Rt. Rev. Monsignor Frank A. O'Brien, LL.D., for the bringing of Father Campbell here, and one and all, we wish to make grateful acknowledgment.

Mayor Preston, we thank you for the warm and generous welcome you have accorded to us. You are Mayor of the most beautiful city in the world, and you number among your population summer residents from every part of the Union.

That this event may stimulate and foster the study of the history of Michigan and the old Northwest is my earnest hope.

THE CHAIRMAN: From the reception you gave Mr. Wood, I am sure you entertain towards him, the identical views I have held for many years.

This morning, I was delegated to meet the next speaker upon his arrival here by boat. Within three minutes after meeting him, all through the day and up to within a few minutes ago, Father Camp-

bell entertained me from an inexhaustible fund of stories and anecdotes touching upon almost every subject under the sun.

It must not be supposed, however, that Father Campbell had devoted his entire time to the light side of life. Far from it. As a noted member of the Society of Jesus, for nearly 50 years, he has traveled in all parts of the world and come into contact with all kinds of people. As a natural consequence, he has acquired a taste for history, especially history of Canada and the old Northwest Territory, scenes of the early missionary work of his predecessors. His knowledge of the early explorers and missionaries is profound. He is recognized as one of the greatest living authorities on the early explorers and missionaries of this region, in the world.

I have the pleasure of introducing Rev. Thomas J. Campbell, S. J., of New York, author and historian, who will entertain and interest you in his address on the Life and Character of John Nicolet.

ADDRESS OF REV. THOMAS J. CAMPBELL, S. J.

The memorial tablet of Jean Nicolet which has been affixed to the rocks of the Island of Mackinac is not only the record of a notable historical event, but is also the declaration of a doctrine. It is a protest against a philosophical theory prevalent at the present day, which makes man the creature as well as the victim of his environment; a theory which assails the dignity of human nature by robbing it of its freedom of will, and connotes a mental attitude despised even by the old pagans themselves. 'The just man,' sings the famous Roman poet, 'will persist in his purpose; and even if the whole world were to crash about his head, he will stand amid the ruins undismayed.' The Christian view is not content even with this, and proclaims that he alone is the true hero who makes disaster itself contribute to his glory.

Jean Nicolet was not a great explorer like Champlain; he was not a picturesque Governor like Frontenac; not a daring fighter like Iberville; not even a successful discoverer like Marquette, nor a martyr like his friends Brebeuf, Jogues, Daniel, Garnier, and Garreau. He occupied no conspicuous position in the official world; he was not entrusted with the building or moulding or modifying

of a commonwealth or a colony; he was simply an employe in a trading post; an Indian interpreter who passed the longest and most ambitious period of his life, amid surroundings that were calculated to tear out of his heart, not only every noble aspiration, but every recollection of Christianity and civilization; yet he was a man who was not only not influenced or harmed by them, but made them minister to his advancement in the noblest qualities that adorn humanity. In being such, he achieved a greater glory than the one which this tablet specifically commemorates: namely his entrance into a new and unknown territory. Being so concealed from the public gaze, and engaged in work that usually escapes recognition, it is a remarkable tribute to his work, that after almost three hundred years, he should be selected by a great Commonwealth as particularly worthy of honor. He is not only the first white man who appeared in what is now the State of Michigan, but he is a man whose virtues may be proposed to the youth of the country as an example and an inspiration.

He was a mere lad when he stepped ashore at Quebec in 1618; and the conditions that prevailed there, at that time, must have filled him with consternation and dismay. For ten years the heroic Champlain had been struggling with adversity, and each year only brought him nearer to the brink of destruction and despair. He was in the relentless grip of a Fur Company that not only owned the colony, but had determined to defeat the magnificent project of making it a mighty appanage of the crown of France and of increasing the glory and power of the mother country in the New World. For the traders, it was to be merely a post for the making of money. The establishment of a colony of Europeans and the conversion and civilization of the savages, or the higher considerations of patriotism did not enter into their calculations, and Champlain was thwarted at every step. The result was that while the English Colony of Jamestown in Virginia had, about that time, 4,000 settlers, who owned their own lands and made their own laws, Quebec had no more than 40 or 50 people, even including the employes of the Company and the missionaries, and they were all dependent on the heartless corporation even for bread to eat. The fort was in a state of dilapidation and decay; no assistance could be obtained even to repair its walls, and the countless journeys of Champlain across the ocean to plead for his wretched colony only met with apathy and unconcern, or with promises that were never kept. In spite of it all, however, he kept up the unequal fight. Though beaten and beaten again, he persevered, in spite of accumulated disasters

REV. THOMAS J. CAMPBELL, S. J.

which would have crushed any ordinary man, until at last, after more than a quarter of a century, he won the glory of being classed among the greatest men in the history of the Western World.

It must have been the contemplation of Champlain's splendid personality that inspired young Nicolet to live in like manner in the humble career in which Providence had placed him. Around him were a number of young reprobates whose names are infamous in Canadian history: Vignau, who endeavored to murder Champlain; Brulé, whose morals were so depraved that he was killed by the savages; and Marsollet, who, though not so base as the others, proved a traitor when Quebec succumbed to the English. Not only with these and their similars did Nicolet have nothing to do, but he, by his example, unconsciously no doubt, but truly nevertheless, inaugurated that long line of youthful Canadian heroes whose equals it would be difficult to find in the history of any other country. There was, for example, young François Marguerie, the idol of the colony, a splendid Indian fighter of whom it is recorded that once when he stood with his sword at the throat of a savage, dropped it, saying: 'If I kill him I shall be killed instantly. If I am tortured to death I shall have more time to prepare,' and he surrendered. There was his companion, Normanville, who would travel hundreds of miles, in mid-winter, to get a priest for a sick Indian, and who, after a life of adventures ending in the valiant defense of Three Rivers, was burned at the stake on the Mohawk; there was Charles Le Moyne, the defender of Montreal when he was only a stripling, who, besides the memory of his countless exploits, left as a heritage to New France a remarkable family of heroes such as Iberville, Longueuil, Sainte-Helene, Bienville, Chateaugay and the rest; and omitting a throng of others (like Goupil, Couture, Lalande and the wonderful Christian Indian boy, Armand Jean, who reflected honor on the great Cardinal Richelieu after whom he was named) it will be sufficient to recall the memory of the glorious sixteen under Daulac or Dollard (only one of whom was above 30) who, in spite of their youth and inexperience, withstood 800 Iroquois, and by the sacrifice of their lives, for every one fell, saved New France from utter destruction. Jean Nicolet was the first leader of this glorious line.

The first test to which he was put was his appointment as interpreter on Allumette Island, far up the Ottawa. No doubt, like any other healthy boy, he was fascinated by the wild beauty of the region through which he passed on his first journey into the depths of the country. He had never seen anything equal to the Rideau

as it dropped curtain-like into the mighty river beneath; nothing so terrible as the Chaudiere where the Indians, descending or ascending the stream, performed their incantations, to propitiate the evil spirits that dwelt in the boiling waters; nothing so startling as the angry leap of the waters over the rocks of the Calumet where today stands, under the pines, the gleaming marble shaft, a la memoire de Cadieux, who in his days, was to be another Nicolet. All this doubtless amazed and delighted him, but the poetry of the life was soon dissipated when he found himself in the grossness and squalor and filth, both physical and moral, of the Algonquin wigwams. The aborigines were far from being the noble creatures depicted by Fenimore Cooper and other romancers, but were steeped in the foulest vices; and again and again the missionaries protested against leaving young and unprotected boys in such surroundings, without any religious assistance to keep them from becoming as bad as the savages themselves. But the traders, whose employe Nicolet was, considered moral disasters of very little importance if the store houses at Quebec were filled with furs.

In that place, young Nicolet remained for two years, completely mastering the various Algonquin dialects, and exercising such an influence over his Indian friends that he was able to lead four hundred of their braves down to the Mohawk to make a treaty of peace with the terrible Iroquois.

Of course this embassy was due, in large measure at least to Champlain; and it goes far to exculpate him from the charge, so frequently urged against him, that the long series of Iroquois wars were the result of his indiscretion. As a matter of fact, the battles of Lake Champlain and Cap au Massacre were unavoidable, for the Iroquois were actually invading the country and had to be repelled, if an indiscriminate massacre of red and white men alike was to be averted. To have made a treaty of peace so soon after the battle of Oneida, clearly shows the falsity of the accusation that the Iroquois nourished an implacable hatred of the French. After Nicolet's visit to them, the incursions ceased and were renewed only when the incompetency and blundering of some of Champlain's successors prompted the Indians to dig up the hatchet and renew their depredations.

Nicolet remained for two years on Allumette Island, and was then transferred to the Nipisirien country which the missionaries called the land of the sorcerers, because, day and night, the drum of the medicine-men was heard on the lake or in the forests conjuring the evil spirits. Evidently a great change had been wrought

in the disposition of the Indians of those regions, and it was most likely the result of Nicolet's skill in managing them. Only a few years before, Champlain was warned that it was as much as his life was worth to venture among them, but young Nicolet not only establishes a trading post among them, but is adopted by the tribe, becomes one of the great chiefs, with a voice in their most solemn councils, and participates in all their hunting and warlike expeditions. In this place he lived nine consecutive years, undergoing all the hardships of the savages, and we hear of him frequently passing two or three days without a morsel to eat, and on one occasion supporting life for five or six weeks by gnawing the bark of the forest trees. He kept a record of these adventures, and gave it to the Jesuit Fathers, but we have been unable to lay hands on it.

It was during this period that an overwhelming disaster befell the colony, in the capture of what was supposed to be the stronghold of Quebec. In 1628, while Champlain was anxiously waiting for supplies from Europe, to stave off starvation from the garrison and the colony, an English ship under the famous Kirke, appeared in the river and demanded the surrender of the fort. The garrison had absolutely no food at the time, and there were but fifty pounds of powder in the magazine, but Champlain defied the enemy to make the assault. Astounded by the answer, Kirke actually lifted anchor, and sailed down the river; but the next year three ships appeared and the French flag was hauled down from the citadel and the banner of England floated in its place.

It was on this occasion that the dastardly character of young Brulé and Marsollet displayed itself. They had revealed the helpless condition of the garrison to the enemy and were on the very ships that had come to demand the surrender of the city. Absolutely unlike them was Jean Nicolet. He remained at his post among the Nippisiriens, and waited for better times.

In 1632, Champlain came back again, no longer in the fetters of the Trading Company, but as the Lieutenant of Richelieu and the first Governor of New France. After a fight of twenty-four years, he had triumphed, and only then did the colony on the St. Lawrence begin to live. Nicolet was recalled from the interior and given charge of the trading post at Three Rivers.

It was during this period that he was commissioned by Champlain to discover the great river that was supposed to empty into the Western Sea. He was thus about to realize the dream that had haunted the imagination of Europe for centuries about the

passage to China or Cathay. The delusion had assumed a new form after the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes had been explored. The sapient geographers of the world judged that as there was a mighty river flowing east from the center of the continent there must be a corresponding one flowing west, to preserve the equilibrium. To find it, Nicolet set out from Three Rivers and this was the reason why his wanderings led him to the Island of Mackinac. He came dressed as a Chinese mandarin, in a gorgeous robe of damask which was richly embroidered with figures of birds and flowers; in the hope of awakening some long-buried atavistic memories in the minds of the savages who were supposed by the learned men of the times to be of Asiatic origin.

On the other hand, it is difficult to conceive that either Champlain or Nicolet shared in this delusion. They both knew the Indians too well. Champlain had passed a whole winter among the Hurons and his account of the habits and character of those savages is, today, a classic for the ethnological student. Nicolet had lived eleven years among the Algonquins and Nippisiriens, and he also was perfectly well aware that, apart from some mythological nonsense about their origin, there was no tradition of anything whatever connecting them with the Chinese.

Indeed, it is quite possible that it was merely to satisfy some theorist in France or Quebec that the masquerade was adopted. The report of his coming, however, as the great representative of the white men, to arrange for a treaty of peace was, of course, rapidly spread among the tribes and, somewhere on the shores of Lake Michigan, four or five thousand Indians assembled to meet him. It was an amazing spectacle for them. The distinguished envoy whom doubtless many of them had known at Allumette and Lake Nippising, was no longer in his usual attire of a hunter, but in a splendid robe such as they had never seen before. On either side of him great poles were erected on which numberless presents were displayed. In his hands he held two ponderous horse-pistols, and after haranguing them in their own language and expatiating on the desirability of a lasting and universal peace with the supreme chief at Quebec, he lifted up his instruments of war towards the sky. A terrible explosion followed, and the squaws, and perhaps many of the braves, scampered away in terror from the mighty man who held the thunders of heaven in his hands. They soon recovered their senses, however, and as no one was injured, they returned to express their satisfac-

tion with the proposals of peace and the presents which he had come to offer. But from none of them could he learn anything of China, nor did he find the great river that flowed into the Pacific, though he reported on his return to Quebec, that a few days' journey would have carried him thither. It is somewhat surprising that he did not continue his search but possibly it was because the river they spoke of took a southerly, and not a westerly course, and could not therefore be the one he was sent out to find. Had he done so he would have anticipated Marquette by nearly forty years.

This was in 1634. On Christmas day, 1635, the great Champlain, worn out by his life of hardships and perhaps by the worry to which he had been subjected from the first day he built his miserable hut at the rock of Quebec, at last went to his well-merited reward. He was succeeded by Montmagny, whose name, Onontio, an Indian translation of Great Mountain, remained as the discriptive designation of all subsequent governors of Quebec. Montmagny was a worthy successor of Champlain, whom he took for a model, and during his long tenure of office did efficient work in building up the colony, in spite of the apathy of the Home Government which left him almost without resources. Louis XIV was too busy with his European enemies to find time enough to learn of the importance of his colonial possessions.

At last, some one stirred up the Iroquois; and then Canada entered upon the bloody epoch of her history. Three Rivers, where Nicolet was living, was the central point of attack, and the St. Lawrence was swarming with Iroquois in war paint. Brebeuf had come down from the upper country and narrowly escaped with his life on his way down to Quebec. The war, however, was not precisely against the whites. It was an attack on the old foes of the Iroquois the Algonquins, but the French of course were involved. It was at this juncture that young Marguerie returned from captivity as an Iroquois envoy, and was sent to the French fort to arrange a treaty of peace. But in spite of it all, warlike preparations were soon made, forts were built on the other side of the St. Lawrence; Montmagny came up from Quebec to direct the fight if it should assume large proportions; there were raids and captures here and there, and in the melee we see the figure of Nicolet constantly appearing. He with Father Ragueneau are crossing and recrossing the St. Lawrence again and again, entering the forts of the Iroquois, at the risk of their lives, to plead for a reconciliation, until

finally after some show of fight on the part of the invaders a temporary calm resulted. This was in the year 1641.

Soon afterwards Nicolet was summoned to Quebec to take the place of his brother-in-law, Le Tardif, as chief official of the trading company. He was hardly there a month, when news came down from Three Rivers that a Sokoki Indian was about to be put to death by the Algonquins. This meant a renewal of hostilities, for the Sokokis of Maine were allies of the Iroquois and the execution of the captive had to be stopped at all hazards. It was then October 27th; the ice was forming in the river, the night was coming on, but, without a moment's hesitation, Nicolet leaped aboard a shallop that was making for Sillery. While rounding the point a squall struck the boat, and in a moment the crew were struggling with icy waters. One by one they disappeared in the dark river though only a short distance from shore. Nicolet and de Chavigny were soon the only ones left. At last, chilled by the bitter cold and feeling his strength completely exhausted, Nicolet called out to his friend, 'Make for the shore, de Chavigny, you can swim. Bid good-bye to my wife and children; I am going to God.' The waves closed over him and he was never seen again. De Chavigny succeeded in reaching the shore, and more dead than alive, staggered into the Jesuit house at Sillery, where he told the dreadful occurrence to Father de Brebeuf. The news spread consternation in the colony. The Indians especially were alarmed, for they had lost a friend, a protector, and a father, and they ran like crazy people up and down the bank of the river, crying 'Achirra! Achirra! Shall we never see thee more?' The whites too had reason to fear. No one exercised such an influence over the natives as Nicolet. He bent them without difficulty to his will, at any moment and for all kinds of enterprises. As a Christian, the missionaries bear testimony that his virtues were those of the apostolic times, and that even the most devoted priest might take him as a model of piety and self-sacrifice. Perhaps the best description of his character, in this respect, may be found in the list of books contained in his little library at Quebec. It consisted of: 'The Metamorphosis of Ovid'; 'The Relation of 1637'; 'Portuguese Discoveries in the West Indies'; 'Collection of Gazettes from 1634'; 'The Art of Fencing'; 'Inventory of Science'; 'History of St. Ursula'; 'Meditations on the Life of Christ'; 'The Secretary of the Court'; 'The Clock of Devotion'; 'The Way to Live for God'; 'Elements of Logic'; 'The Holy Duties of a Devout Life'; 'History of Portugal'; 'Missal'; 'Life of

the Redeemer of the World'; 'History of the West Indies'; 'The Lives of the Saints' in folio.

Such was Jean Nicolet; a man who occupied a very humble place, even in the miserable colony of Quebec, but who, by the force of his own irreproachable character exercised a most extraordinary influence for good, both among the colonists and the natives. From the very beginning of his career, though thrown into surroundings which had wrecked the lives of many of his compatriots and had changed them from the representatives of most excellent families into wild and depraved coureurs de bois, he had kept his own virtue untarnished. He was entrusted by his superiors with the most important missions, and was admired and loved by such men as de Brebeuf, Ragueneau, Jogues, and indeed by all the missionaries. In brief he was a man of the world who at every stage of his short career would have been able to utter the same words that left his lips when the waters of the St. Lawrence were closing over him: "I am going to God."

Michigan may be well proud of the first white man who set foot on its territory.

THE CHAIRMAN: There is an old saying that comes to us from antiquity:—"The noblest motive is the public good." This thought is exemplified in the work of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, as well as the Michigan Historical Commission.

About 25 years ago, a just Congress ceded to the state of Michigan, for state park purposes, this part of Mackinac Island. To take charge of this park, the legislature created a commission known as the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, giving it full authority and a small annual appropriation for its maintenance.

It was therefore eminently fitting that the Michigan Historical Commission, charged by the legislature with the task of preserving Michigan history, should cooperate with the Mackinac Island State Park Commission in placing memorial tablets of early explorers and missionaries in this state park. It is also becoming that the presentation of this tablet today, to the state of Michigan, should be made by the President of the Michigan Historical Commission.

Monsignor O'Brien is so well known in the state, so beloved by all, that he needs no introduction by me. His ripe scholarship, his analytical mind, his reputation as a critic of history, as well as his recognized ability as an historian of Michigan, eminently qualifies

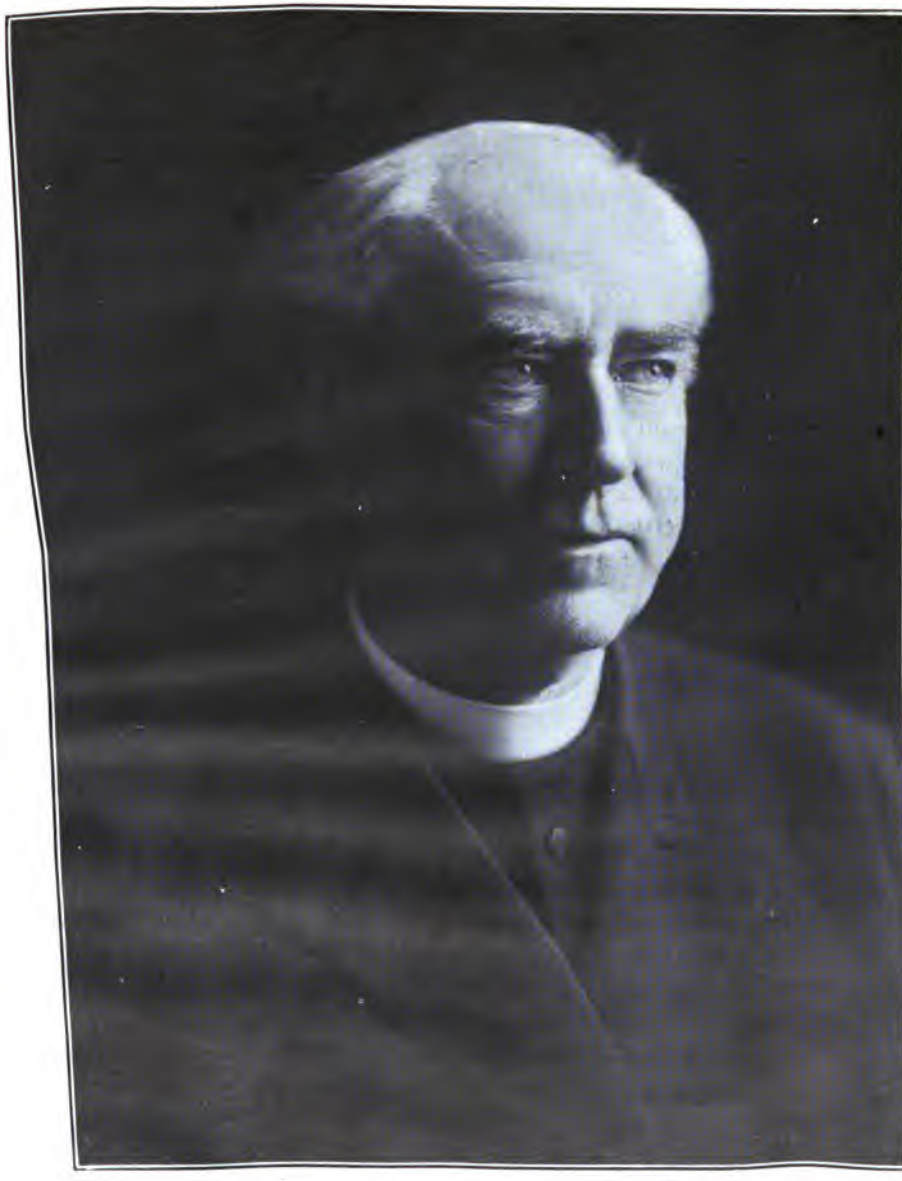
him for the exalted position which he occupies. Rt. Rev. Monsignor Frank A. O'Brien, LL. D., of Kalamazoo, President of the Michigan Historical Commission, will now present the tablet of John Nicolet.

ADDRESS OF RT. REV. MONSIGNOR O'BRIEN.

"We have heard from the lips of one of the most noted historians in the world, the graphically told story of the hero of the day. Little did John Nicolet think when he was attempting such wonders, that his memory would be cherished, and a bronze tablet erected, two hundred years after he had passed away. Nature had endowed him with wondrous gifts. Grace had supernaturalized his ambition into a burning fidelity to God and country. Others were blessed with great loyalty; others enjoyed a greater rank, but none possessed a nobler nature, a stronger arm, or a more devoted heart. He had the soldier's aspirations, without the soldier's love of greed. He had the love of victory, without the love of honors which it gave. He yearned for something great, yet he felt that this old world would give him little to do. France had not been able to call his greatness into action. He sought other fields to increase his country's glory by discovery. He sought to spread God's Kingdom. Under the banner of the cross he went forward. He led his chosen bands through wilds unknown. He was as swift as lightning to resolve, and as firm as a rock in execution. Where others hesitated, he quailed not. He was majestic, animated, resistless and persistent. He did better than he knew. Today he receives honors, which he won."

THE CHAIRMAN: The absence of Judge Steere, of the Supreme Court of Michigan, necessitated the selection of another well known man of Michigan to accept the tablet on behalf of the state. Fortunately, Honorable Lawton T. Hemans, although not in the best of health, was prevailed upon to represent the state in this instance. A better choice for this honor, could not have been made.

I have had the pleasure—and it has been a great pleasure—to know Mr. Hemans for years. As a public representative in Lansing and later, as candidate for Governor of Michigan, he endeared himself to all by his lovable and enduring qualities of heart and



RIGHT REV. MONSIGNOR FRANK A. O'BRIEN, LL. D.

mind. His deep learning, his high character and his knowledge of the state of Michigan, both in the early times as well as of today, gives him a standing possessed by few and excelled by none. As an historian of Michigan, his books have received much deserved praise; as a man, his lovableness, his simplicity, his sterling character and broad mindedness, are known and appreciated; as a public official, his reputation is without stain.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce Honorable Lawton T. Hemans, Chairman of the Michigan Railroad Commission, and a member of the Michigan Historical Commission, who will accept the tablet on behalf of the State.

Mr. Hemans in felicitous and extremely appropriate words accepted the tablet on behalf of the State of Michigan.

THE CHAIRMAN: We will now close the exercises of the day by by the audience rising and singing our national anthem, "My Country 'Tis of Thee."

Among those present were Mr. William L. Jenks, of Port Huron; and Professor Claude H. Van Tyne, head of the Department of History in Michigan University, members of the Michigan Historical Commission; Mr. W. O. Briggs, member of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, and Mrs. Briggs; Mr. William H. Hughes, of Detroit, editor of "The Michigan Catholic"; the Rev. P. A. Mullins and Rev. J. L. McGeary, of Loyola University, Chicago; Rev. R. Champion, of Ecorse; Hon. George W. Weaver, treasurer of Charlevoix County; Mr. James H. Began, Dr. and Mrs. Robert H. Harvey, Mr. E. Puttkammer, Mr. George B. Chambers, Mr. W. A. Amberg, State Senator James C. Wood, of Manistique, J. J. Cleary, of Escanaba.

Governor Ferris, who had expected to be present was detained by other public business.

LETTERS OF APPRECIATION.

HON. J. M. C. SMITH, M. C.: The warmth of your invitation to attend the unveiling of the tablet to John Nicolet, adds much to my sincere regret that I cannot be present in person on the occasion of such a memorable and laudable incident. To pay tribute to a man who endured the hardships, encountered the dangers and made the sacrifice to enter the wilds of a vast and unknown country inhabited by a strange people, is most fitting.

We do well to make permanent, the record of such an event. We class as fortunate in our time, and extend unstinted praise to the person who incorporates into his life work a great achievement.

To be the first of the white race to set foot on the soil of the great great northwest is truly memorable. The great progress of our beloved commonwealth since that day unfolds a series of developments that would have eclipsed the most vivid imagination in his day.

From winding trails and unknown water courses as the only highways, our state today is covered with a network of good roads and railways. The telegraph and telephone make us close neighbors throughout our republic. The age of electricity has worked revelations; science and commerce know no bounds.

Dense forests have been transformed into luxurious fields and where once stood only clusters of Indian tepees, we have beautiful villages and cities.

To be the first to lead the way into a great state abounding in timber, iron, copper, coal, salt and profitable agriculture, unexcelled in its healthgiving resorts, its varied industries; the home of fine furniture, vast paper mills, extensive electrical utilities, large threshing and rotary plants, with its silk and woolen mills; its great industrial occupations, its splendid churches and wonderful institutions of learning, leaves nothing wanting to add to our independence, happiness and permanent welfare. Truly the mission of Nicolet was an epoch and a distinction.

He came to Quebec in 1618 at the age of twenty years from his home in Cherbourg, a naval town on the Western coast of France. He spent a number of years exiled from civilization, allied with barbarous tribes, that he might know their character and their country. He negotiated an important treaty between the Winneba-

go and Huron Indian tribes. His mission was one of peace and progress. He had appreciative words for everybody. He had great intelligence and undaunted courage. He was a man of sterling integrity, deeply religious, and the imprint of Christian civilization seemed to follow his footsteps.

At the age of forty-four he met an untimely death by drowning, and the beautiful waters of the St. Lawrence which had enchanted the years of his early life, furnished his burial place. He stands exalted now by the side of those worthy explorers, discoverers and teachers, Champlain, Marquette, LaSalle and Joliet.

He is deserving of the consideration and praise of an appreciative state. It was made better by his life. He will live in the hearts and memory of a great commonwealth and sanctify the beautiful tablet so worthily unveiled this day to his everlasting memory.

MR. JUSTICE RUSSELL C. OSTRANDER. The early history of the Northwest is a subject of great interest to me, and I am in sympathy with efforts to preserve the facts and mark the places and honor the men connected with that history.

SENATOR WALTER R. TAYLOR. The services of such men, who risked all and suffered hardships innumerable for the benefit of posterity, cannot be too well remembered or too highly extolled, not only in justice to them, but for the beneficial influence on this and succeeding generations.

MR. JUSTICE FRANZ C. KUHN. I think it is indeed fitting that the memory of this intrepid explorer and Christian hero should be perpetuated. I assure you of my sympathy with the work that your Commission is doing to commemorate the achievements of these famous pioneers.

HON. JAMES B. BALCH, *Mayor of Kalamazoo.* I am deeply interested in the early history of the northwest, and I consider the placing of this tablet of John Nicolet most appropriate, as the Island was of the most prominence in those earlier days.

UNITED STATES SENATOR WILLIAM ALDEN SMITH. I have received the invitation to be present at the unveiling of the bronze tablet to the memory of John Nicolet, whose deeds of valor and knightly heroism challenge the admiration of his countrymen. I express the sincere hope that nothing may occur to mar the ceremony which you have planned and that a revival of interest in this truly great man may prove an inspiration to us all.

HON. H. B. COLMAN, *Kalamazoo.* I should greatly enjoy joining with the citizens of Michigan in doing honor to this fearless and heroic pioneer of Christian civilization in the Northwest.

STATE SENATOR FRANK L. COVERT, *Pontiac.* I am very strongly in favor of the plan of marking the historical spots in Michigan and taking steps to preserve the memory of those hardy pioneers who had to do with the early history of our state.

HON. ORAMEL B. FULLER, *Auditor General.* The State Park Commission and others interested are to be commended for establishing the tablet in honor of John Nicolet as it adds to the historical value of the Park.

HON. LYNN J. LEWIS, *Bangor.* I am in hearty sympathy with all movements intended to commemorate the events and history of our most adventurous past; this memorial to the brave and intrepid John Nicolet is a very commendable movement, and I trust it will be continued until the beauty parks of Michigan have placed within their limits some memorial of some great event or personage connected with the early exploration and settlement of this great State.

PROF. A. C. MCLAUGHLIN, *University of Chicago.* I congratulate the Historical Commission on the worthy work it has undertaken.

RT. REV. M. J. HOBAN, D. D., *Bishop of Scranton, Pa.* The Michigan Historical Commission deserves great credit for their zeal in commemorating the achievements of the famous pioneers of the Northwest.

FORMER VICE PRESIDENT CHARLES W. FAIRBANKS. I am just in receipt of an invitation to attend the unveiling of a bronze tablet in honor of John Nicolet. Of course I am denied the privilege of being present; nevertheless I want to congratulate you upon the event.

RT. REV. JAMES MCGOLRICK, D. D., *Bishop of Duluth.* In honoring this early hero of the Northwest the Michigan Historical Commission does honor to itself and to all those connected with its work.

MOST REV. JOHN IRELAND, D. D., *Arch Bishop of St. Paul.* I heartily congratulate the Michigan Historical Commission on the good work it is doing by perpetuating the names of the early discoverers of the Northwest. We owe to them a debt of gratitude which we should take every opportunity to repay. Among them John Nicolet stands out very prominently and it is well that his memory receive due hnoor.

REGRETS.

Formal regrets were received from:

United States Senator Theodore E. Burton, Cleveland.

United States Senator J. Hamilton Lewis, Chicago.

Mr. Justice Day, of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Mr. Justice Moore, of the Michigan Supreme Court.

Mr. Justice Steere, of the Michigan Supreme Court.

Hon. Julius C. Burrows, Kalamazoo.

Hon. Winfield S. Hammond, Governor of Minnesota.

Hon. Samuel M. Ralston, Governor of Indiana.

Hon. Thomas J. O'Brien, Grand Rapids.

Hon. Luren D. Dickinson, Lieutenant Governor of Michigan.

Hon. Frank E. Doremus, M. C., Detroit.

Hon. Patrick H. Kelley, M. C., Lansing.

President Harry B. Hutchins, of the University of Michigan.

President H. L. Stetson, of Kalamazoo College.

Rt. Rev. Bishop Shahan, D. D., President of the Catholic University of America.

Very Rev. President John C. Cavanaugh, C. S. C., D. D., of the University of Notre Dame, Ind.

Hon. Alexander M. Dockery, Third Assistant Postmaster General.

Rev. H. O'Neill, Pastor Holy Maternity Church, Dowagiac.

Very Rev. James C. French, C. S. C., D. Ph., Notre Dame, Indiana.

Rev. Joseph Reis, Pastor Sacred Heart Church, Saginaw.

Rev. Timothy Kroboth, East Jordan.

Very Rev. R. W. Brown, Rector St. James Church, Grand Rapids.

Rev. Mich J. Cumerford, Flint.

Very Rev. V. Marijou, C. S. B., Pastor Ste. Anne de Detroit, Detroit.

Rev. L. J. Brancheau, S. T. L., Pastor St. Mary's Church, Lansing.

Mr. Clarence E. Bement, President Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, Lansing.

Mr. Evarts B. Greene, President Illinois State Historical Library.

Miss Josephine O'Flynn, Librarian and Recording Secretary, American Catholic Historical Society, Philadelphia.

Mr. Clarence A. Burley, President Chicago Historical Society, Chicago.

Daniel Wait Howe, President the Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

Mr. A. Howard Clark, Secretary General and Registrar General S. A. R., Washington.

Mr. Edward Osgood Brown, Chicago.

Mr. Henry Davis, Springfield, Illinois.

Mr. Leo M. Butzel, Detroit.

Mr. L. F. Knowles, Detroit.

Mr. H. Shearer, M. C. Ry.

Mr. Roger C. Sullivan, Chicago.

Mr. Ed. McGurrin, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Dr. O. L. Schmidt, Chicago.

Rev. John D. O'Shea, Roseville.

Rt. Rev. F. F. Eis, Bishop of Marquette.

Mr. J. B. Stimpson, Mackinaw City.

Very Rev. Edward C. Caldwell, Saginaw.

Hon. Augustus C. Carton, Secretary of the Public Domain Commission and Commissioner of Immigration.

Hon. Harry A. Conant, United States Consul at Windsor, Ontario.

State Senator John A. Damon, Mt. Pleasant.

State Senator J. Lee Morford, Otsego.

Representative Fred L. Warner, Ionia.

Hon. Lynn J. Lewis, Bangor.

Hon. Charles S. Pierce, Clerk of the Michigan House of Representatives.

Hon. Servetus A. Correll, Judge of Probate, Charlevoix.

Hon. Levi L. Barbour, Detroit.

Hon. Claudius B. Grant, Detroit.

Most Rev. John J. Glennon, D. D., Archbishop of St. Louis, Missouri.

Most Rev. Henry Mœller, D. D., Archbishop of Cincinnati, Norwood, Ohio.

Rt. Rev. P. J. Muldoon, D. D., Rockford, Illinois.

Rt. Rev. J. M. Koudelka, D. D., Bishop of Superior, Wisconsin.

Rt. Rev. M. F. Burke, Bishop of St. Joseph, Missouri.

Rt. Rev. M. J. Lavelle, V. G., The Cathedral Rectory, New York City.

Very Rev. E. R. Dyer, D. D., St. Mary's University, Baltimore, Md.

Rt. Rev. F. W. Gavisk, Indianapolis.

Rev. Thomas Fagan, Rector of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Mother Mary Florence, Mt. St. Joseph, Ohio.

Rev. Stephen A. Wittliff, Pastor St. Patrick's Church, Brighton.
Mr. Edward B. Desenburg, Kalamazoo.
Mr. John B. Drake, Chicago.
Mr. H. H. Crowell, Grand Rapids, President Michigan Railway Co.

Wish I could give some quick panacea
It can't be done

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Ever since my student days I have felt that there was no inherent reason why [illegible] should [illegible] be in public life.

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